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FOR 1888.  
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THE CHINA DIRECTORY.  
TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL ISSUE,  
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## SHIPPING IN PORT.

## SHIPPING IN JAPANESE WATERS.

DESTINA-

## EXTRACT.

## THE CULTURE OF THE MISSES.

Last week I accepted an invitation to dinner at the house of some friends in town. Having lived the later part of my life in China, this was the first gathering of the kind I had been to for fifteen years, and it looked forward to it with a mild feeling of agreeable excitement which is an habitual dinner-out would seem childish and even contemptible.

I derive a good deal of pleasure—harmless weakness, surely—from the conversation of young ladies; and I was gratified to find that, in spite of my grey hairs, I was not considered too ancient to take a very pretty girl of nineteen or twenty in dinner. But when I looked at her again I felt a little nervous. She seemed so very importunate and ugly. What topic should I start? Recollecting my only two festivities previous to this evening, I said—

"Are you a theatre-goer, Miss Colly?" She looked at me with much intensity of expression and replied,

"Yes, occasionally. But like the ancient Athenian, my soul revels most in the works of the Attic Bee."

Myself: "Ah—yes—of course" (Reflection: "Who on earth is the Attic Bee, or B? Shall I say I suppose he was 'Born in a garret, and in a kitchen bred?' But no. I must be serious—deeply in earnest, like my fair companion.)

She: "Did you ever take part in any representation of the works of the Tragedy Three?"

Myself: "N—no; I never did. I am no actor. As a recreation I think I prefer music. Are you a musician?"

She: "No. I should hesitate to say that. I imagined that no one short of a true composer could claim such a name. Melody I do not care for; but harmony has an effect on my soul strange and sublime. It lifts me above beyond the present, and plunges it at once into the ethereal and the infinite."

Myself: "I heard down old Santeley sing his famous song from 'Pygmalion and Galatea' last week. One never gets tired of 'Huddler than the Oberly!'"

"No. But you must mean 'Acis and Galatea' which is a cantata of Handel's founded on a totally different mythological story from the old legend embodied by the modern dramatist in 'Pygmalion and Galatea'."

Myself: "Yes, to be sure—of course. How stupid of me to confound them!" Here there was a pause. I looked furtively at the menu to see how much more of this I must endure. I felt quite flattered now. But my companion, no doubt, was seeking fresh woods and pastures new whether to lead my bewilarded spirits. Suddenly producing a pair of pine-neg (hideous disfigurements, which I suppose have become necessities to ladies, for they appear to be in universal use), she asked as she placed them on her nose—

"What is your favourite pursuit, Mr. Blank? Mental pursuit, I mean."

"Well! I said assuring a reflective air, while I anxiously meditated how best to escape an answer, it was rather difficult to say all at once. May I ask what yours is?"

"Oh, mine are philosophy, in the abstract, and the dissemination of real education, as opposed to superficial cramming, in the concrete."

"Indeed. (I never to be on very thin ice. I must proceed with caution.) And what system of philosophy do you follow?"

"Oh, Spencer, as a materialist. Buckle is interesting, only he is so barren in his ideas. But there is a great deal, of course, that sets one thinking in Descartes and old Butler. It is curious that one can only be absolutely certain of one solitary fact, isn't it?"

"Very. And that fact is—I controlled myself completely at that point. The only fault of which I was absolutely certain was that I should be unspeakably glad when this young person went away." I mean one's own existence," she went on. "The consciousness of this is the only one thing we can be really sure of; everything else is only more or less probable. How would you prove your personal identity, Mr. Blank? I mean how would you demonstrate it scientifically?"

It was a profound silence. I could manage to resume, and answered, with inward trembling: "That is a large question—in fact one of the most insoluble problems, is it not?"

"Yes; that is just what Butler says. But, you know, there are so many problems. There is education, for instance. How are we to make it real—among the lower orders, I mean. The Code of 1870, of course, was a great advance; but you know it has failed miserably."

"Has it, indeed? I am sorry for that."

"Oh, miserably. I will just give you an instance. You know how essential it is that definitions should be thoroughly mastered—they really are of primary importance, especially as a training for any sort of philosophical discussion."

I assented, looking as intelligent as circumstances would permit.

"Well," she continued, "I went into a shop yesterday to buy some work materials. I wanted to find, too, how far definitions were practically understood by the middle classes."

"And the shopman disappointed you?"

"It was not the shopman; it was Boss himself, which made it worse. I asked for a diminutive truncated argenteous cone, convex on the sides and semi-perforated with symmetrical indentations. 'And I assure you, Mr. Blank' (here she lowered her nose impatiently), 'it was not the faintest conception of me to meaning. So simple a test as that was too much for him. I had to hide my disgust and explain that I wanted an emblem.'

"I felt that I must make an effort to rise to a higher intellectual level. I said—

"How annoying!" I said sympathetically; "but the fact is that higher education is to teach those classes it must be compulsory. The three R's and the technical schools will never indicate a thorough knowledge of English, nor create the desire to understand it."

"No; but to teach what every one ought to wish to know, by compulsion, always seems to me to be like hugging the catastrophe theory as opposed to natural evolution."

"Does it?" I replied, and could say no more. With the cunning of desperation I fixed my eye on my hostess, and determined to make a last struggle to hold out till she should get up and put an end to my misery. The voice at my elbow went on rabbledly.

"In these days of platforms and publicity it is so hard to tell whether the chemical transmutation process, to speak popularly, or the 'grand propelling power' commanded by Lord Macaulay, is the more efficacious for the propagation of theory. Which do you think?"

"Oh, the latter, most decidedly," I replied. I had not the remotest idea what it was; but I saw that our hostess was drawing on her gloves.

"For my own part, I never can be too thankful that the high school and periodical examination system were inaugurated for my own class in time for me to benefit by them," the voice went on. "But whenever I meet a home-educated, which means an ill-educated woman, I always have a sort of John Bradford feeling."

My bewilderment must now have become distinctly visible, for the young lady smiled with bewitching sweetness as she said: "You've forgotten the allusion, I see. I'll explain it presently."

So saying, she departed in the wake of the other ladies; and I realized in that moment what the feelings of a condemned

criminal must be when he sees the white flag.

Now I am the last man to say a word against "higher education" and "culture." But, Sir, I put it to you: ought culture to make bairns of women in this way? If a man knows a little more than his companions, does he not his crumb of information down their throats during meals? Does a Darwin talk of nothing but science, or a Paget of nothing but surgery? We all know what the answer is. But it is my experience that a learned woman, whatever her other qualities, never can help airing her little stock of knowledge in season and out of season—but especially the latter—to the disgust of all well-conditioned persons, and most particularly to that, Sir, of your obedient servant.—Correspondent *St. James's Budget*.

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